

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

✓ Mr. Bundy:

CIA (Elders) says no
senior CIA officer has
seen Baldwin officially
or socially for some
time. None know source
of this story which
also appeared in N.Y. Times
on April 20.

— CIA - looking for info
Good - Keep after Broderick
— DIA

Some Experts Believe Russia Is Keeping 30,000 Troops in Cuba

Intelligence Authorities Think Total Hasn't Changed Greatly Since Fall and That Men Are Being Rotated

By HANSON W. BALDWIN

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NEW YORK, April 22

A RECENT REASSESSMENT of Soviet forces in Cuba has convinced some intelligence experts that there may be 30,000 to 40,000 Russian military personnel on the island. Many experts believe the number has not actually changed greatly since last fall.

The upward revision of past figures stems from a close study of all available intelligence facts. The experts believe, too, that the Russians are rotating troops to Cuba, not withdrawing them.

These interpretations provide the background for the recent assertion by Senator Kenneth B. Keating (Rep.), New York, that Russian strength in Cuba, despite withdrawals announced by President Kennedy, was still about 17,000 men.

At a news conference April 3, the President estimated that 4000 Soviet soldiers had been withdrawn in recent weeks. He did not estimate the number that remained, but left the impression that about 13,000 were still there.

THERE IS no consensus in Washington about how many Soviet soldiers are in Cuba. In fact, some of the highest government officials and many intelligence officers admit that they do not know how many are on the island.

It is far easier to estimate ton-nages of equipment and numbers of guns than numbers of personnel. Last fall, emphasis in the intelligence community was fixed on the Soviet medium-range missiles in Cuba and there was a tendency, until after the crisis had passed, to neglect the details of the ground forces and of conventional equipment.

Moreover, it has been possible to estimate the numbers of Soviet soldiers withdrawn from the island in recent weeks, but not how many have been brought in.

Many officials are convinced that the Russians are replacing the troops they have withdrawn in a rotation plan similar to those the United States uses for its overseas units.

DETAILS are lacking on what

some Pentagon officials now call the "Soviet expeditionary force" in Cuba. Some experts believe that the Russians are maintaining the equivalent of a heavily reinforced motorized rifle division. Such a division normally numbers about 13,000 men.

The four principal tactical ground units, identified in the past as "battalion-size" units, are still on the island and have made no attempt to conceal their identity. Other units of field artillery, antiaircraft, infantry, and so on, are said to be somewhat harder to pinpoint.

Though many intelligence experts and some Government officials say that they do not know how many Russian troops are in Cuba, one said that he would bet a year's pay that the number was closer to 30,000 than to 17,000, and a month's pay that it was closer to 40,000 than to 17,000.

THE PURPOSES of the continued presence of so large a Soviet force in Cuba could be multiple.

It was undoubtedly intended originally to provide protection for the long-range missiles that Premier Khrushchev attempted to install there last fall. Since the withdrawal of all or part of these missiles, the troops appear to have a number of functions:

(1) To help protect the island against any invasion by the United States or by exile forces aided by the United States.

(2) To perpetuate Premier Fidel Castro's rule and to secure the Communist government there against internal revolt.

(3) To train Cuban forces and other Communist Latin American cadres.

(4) To provide small infiltra-

Continued on Page 3, Col. 2

Cuba Troops

Continued From Page One

tion and subversion units

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Editorial Section

MONDAY, APRIL 22, 1963

NEWS ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

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Continued on Page 8, Col. 2

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tion and subversion units capable of exporting armed Communism to other areas of the Western Hemisphere.

(5) To maintain a base of Soviet Communist military power in the Western Hemisphere for psychological and political purposes and as a bargaining gambit in the world conflict.

Education

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